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Employee News

Congratulations Drew Arnn and Andrew Fontinos!

- ◆ Drew Arnn (senior area forester) and Andrew Fotinos (forest conservation specialist) graduated from the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute (VNRLI) in June. Drew is one of six Central Region graduates of the program.

Welcome to VDOF

- ◆ The public information team welcomes Cindy Frenzel as the new Project Learning Tree (PLT) coordinator. Cindy holds a forestry and wildlife resources degree from Virginia Tech and has extensive environmental education experience. Cindy served as the environmental education coordinator for Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River for more than a decade and has roots at VDOF as a wildfire prevention and education team leader in the Shenandoah Valley, as well as a

wildland/urban fire program coordinator. She is currently a fire prevention education team leader and public information officer with the USDA Forest Service. Cindy rejoins the VDOF team July 19.

- ◆ After an extensive search, the Eastern Region welcomes Daren Williams of Essex County as the new regional mechanic based out of the Providence Forge shop. Daren comes to VDOF from VDOT where he has worked for the past five years as a mechanic. Previously Daren worked for six years as a mechanic for the Maryland National Guard. Daren's first day with the agency will be July 26.

Leaving VDOF

- ◆ It is with sadness that we announce the departure of our Director of Finance Fernanda Crandol. Fernanda has been with VDOF for the past 5 years and has done a great job building and managing a fiscal operation that has supported staff and programs across the agency. Under her guidance payments to staff and our customers have not only been accurate and on time, and we've been able to procure the goods and services we need, as well as maintaining our good standing in state government operations. She also has shown great leadership over the past 18 months as we transition to the Cardinal payroll system. She is taking a position with another agency closer to home and we wish her all the best in the future. Thanks Fernanda!

Inactivation of Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL)

- ◆ In accordance with [DHRM Policy 4.52 Public Health Emergency Leave](#) (PHEL) is activated only when there is a Public Health Emergency declaration, which expired June 30, 2021. Beginning July 1st, employees who are ineligible for remote work and who must quarantine due to known exposure to COVID-19 must **use their available personal, annual, or compensatory leave to cover the absence.**
- ◆ Any employee who tests positive for the COVID-19 virus and becomes symptomatic or ill should use sick leave or other available personal leave and, if necessary and eligible, file a short-term disability claim.
- ◆ A one-time 8 hours of PHEL exception can be provided as an incentive to employees who need to make appointments for vaccinations and/or for their recovery after vaccination; if you have not been vaccinated and are planning on scheduling your appointment, please reach-out to [Tammi Oliva](#) for guidance and approval.

News You Can Use

****Alert! Elm Zigzag Sawfly!**

- ◆ A new non-native insect has been found in Virginia. Last month, VDOF and VDACS were sent a pest alert from Ag Canada about a new pest that feeds on elm trees. A VDACS employee then found a sample in Frederick County, Virginia. The elm zigzag sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*) is native to Asia but was introduced to Europe in 2003, where it has become a pest. In North America, it was detected in Ste. Martine, Québec in 2020 and in Winchester, Virginia in 2021. If you see damage on elm leaves similar to the zigzag feeding lines in the attached photo, please contact VDOF forest health staff, or submit a sample directly to the Virginia Tech Insect Identification Lab. (pictured)



50th Anniversary Reforestation of Timberlands (RT)

- ◆ The Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program began 50 years ago, and it has been a key element in sustainable pine management in Virginia. A number of activities are ongoing to commemorate these achievements, including producing some wooden items. Using original records and tips from VDOF retiree Danny Roberts, we located a 1971 RT project in Spotsylvania County. Originally owned by the Beals family, it is now part of the Oakley Forest Wildlife Management Area. Through the cooperative efforts of Randy Kyner of the Department of Wildlife Resources, we obtained permission to harvest a tree from that stand. On July 8, we cut an 86-foot loblolly pine, loaded it, and had it milled into boards on the same day. The cutting was witnessed by three generations of the Beals family, including Anne, a former member of the Board of Forestry. This ongoing project is truly a team effort: Paul Morse (mechanic), Jeff Hensley (facilities), and David Queen (buildings and grounds) for preparing the truck and trailer; Jonah Fielding (forester) for loading and transporting; Kevin Dodson (technician), sawyer; Owen Ferguson (intern) for audio/video and loading; Todd Groh and Dean Cumbia (forest management), for general assistance; Becky Woodson (program support technician) for administrative processing; and Michelle Stoll (public information), for overall guidance. The project includes many positive messages: the long-term commitment of forest landowners and families, VDOF support and involvement, and interagency cooperation in multiple resource management and land conservation. We'll provide more updates as the project progresses.



Last Week

State Forester

- ◆ Rob Farrell and Terry Lasher (assistant state forester) met virtually with Delegate Rodney Willett and his aide Colleen Grady to share the agency's work related to addressing urban heat islands through tree planting, as well as other linkages between trees and human health. The meeting was facilitated by the Commonwealth of Virginia Engineering & Science Fellowship (COVES) Fellows working with VDOF (Margaret Nagai-Singer) and in Delegate Willett's office (Chelsea Gray).
- ◆ Rob Farrell and Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) met virtually with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Dr. Edwin Martinez-Martinez and Chad Wentz to discuss collaboration between our agencies.

Administration

- ◆ The voicemail system connected to agency landlines at VDOF headquarters has failed and we are unable to restore it due to outdated technology, because the company that originally installed and maintained the system is no longer in business. While we determine next steps, we've requested that

staff forward their work phone lines, the “220” prefix, to their cell phone to ensure calls are not missed. We are looking at three options to correct the situation:

- Eliminate the phone sets we currently use and have the “220” numbers permanently forwarded to staff cell phones.
- A hybrid approach where we would retain limited strategically assigned phone sets and have most phone lines forwarded to cell phones.
- Purchase a new phone system.

We are probably looking at either option 1 or 2 given our mission focus on a mobile workforce and the cost of a new phone system.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ The Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program launched the 2021 Urban and Community Forestry Assistance Grants Request for Proposals (RFP). We will be accepting 1:1 matching grant proposals for the seven eligible categories outlined. Proposals must be received by the Virginia Department of Forestry before 4:30 P. M. on Friday, August 20, 2021. The RFP grant application and budget worksheet can be found on our website here: [Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program](#). If you have any questions about the grant application package please contact Lara Johnson at 434-220-9185 or lara.johnson@dof.virginia.gov or Molly O'Liddy at 434-220-9041 or molly.oliddy@dof.virginia.gov.
- ◆ Trees Virginia has opened registration for the Southern Urban Wood Forum - **Honoring the Tree - Increasing Urban Wood Utilization from Tiny Towns to Mega Municipalities**. The Forum will take place virtually August 3 & 4 and will feature speakers and artisans from across the southern United States. The forum is a collaborative effort between Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Oklahoma & Mississippi to share the different ways urban wood is utilized, with hopes of increasing market capacity. Registration can be found on the Trees Virginia website (<https://treesvirginia.org/events/free/132-southern-urban-wood-forum>). The forum is free to attend, and International Society of Arboriculture/ Society of American Foresters (ISA/SAF) CEUs will be offered.
- ◆ Joe Lehn (urban wood utilization forester) released the 8th edition of the VA Urban Wood Newsletter. <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/VA-Urban-Wood-Group-Newsletter---eighth-edition-.html?soid=1129998786860&aid=c88wJWVIYJk>
- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager) and Joe Lehn provided assistance to the Mississippi Forestry Commission, as they plan to launch their own Urban Wood business directory.

Agency Lands

- ◆ Controlled pollination work on the Lesesne chestnut orchards is finished. Flowers in approximately 350 pollination bags were pollinated on 16 parent trees, including the first transgenic pollen crosses. Nuts from these crosses will be collected this fall.
- ◆ At the Sussex nursery, inventory is completed and is being tabulated, and life plots are being installed to measure germination throughout the season. Plots will be inventoried every 30 days to monitor changes.

State Forests

- ◆ Jack Kauffman (forest management specialist) met with a Department of Wildlife Resources biologist at the Paul State Forest to discuss deer management options and a possible handicap hunt for later this year.

- ◆ Karl Didier (forestland conservation program manager), Andrew Fotinos, Tom Zaebs (assistant state forests manager), Mike Womack (forest management specialist), Ed Zimmer (deputy state forester) via zoom, and Ed Stoots (state lands coordinator) met at the Appomattox-Buckingham office to discuss a possible land trade with a local landowner. The trade could benefit the Commonwealth by trading some property with limited public access for property surrounded by the State Forest. Acres to exchange would be similar.
- ◆ A permit was issued to the United State Marine Corps personnel out of Fort Pickett for a training to occur on the Prince Edward-Gallion State Forest in October. The training involves county resources and military personnel.

State-Owned Lands

- ◆ Jack Kauffman and Ed Stoots visited the State-Owned Lands projects at the College of William & Mary's Ash Lawn, The Department of Corrections - Goochland Women's Center, State Farm and Beaumont properties. Invasive species spraying will start at Goochland the week of July 12th.
- ◆ Ed Stoots visited with Sam Cook of North Carolina State University (NCSU) to discuss their participation in the Natural Capital Exchange (NCX) carbon project. NCSU has enrolled over 24,000 acres of mixed properties owned by either the Foundation, Association, or State-Owned lands into the NCX program in June, with a deferred payment for the carbon to be paid in June / July 2022.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Richmond's regional planning commission (PlanRVA) invited the Capital Team and Smokey Bear to showcase the Virginia Department of Forestry at a Richmond Flying Squirrels game and deliver a message of fire prevention in advance of the Fourth of July holiday. The Capital team showed off one of the Eastern Region engines, answered questions about fire prevention, highlighted VDOF programs, spoke about daily VDOF operations, and handed out Smokey Bear giveaways. Smokey Bear was also invited to throw the ceremonial first pitch of the game in front of a crowd of 3,310! (pictured)



Western Region

- ◆ Andrew Vinson (water quality specialist) and Patti Nylander (senior area forester) assisted with a SHARP Logger training at McCormick Farm in Augusta County. Andrew and Patti spoke on topics of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality and Appalachian hardwood management to a very engaged group of 15 loggers and foresters, including newly hired Daniel Swisher (forest technician).
- ◆ Andrew Vinson and Emily Wotton (forest technician) met with county officials from Bland County in efforts to reinforce the VDOF's relationships with local government. Andrew and Emily met with the County Administrator, Circuit and District Court Clerks, Sheriff and Emergency Services Coordinators, the Bland County Cooperative Extension office, and the Big Walker SWCD/NRCS office.

Central Region

- ◆ Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer) and Chad Stover (regional fire specialist) assisted with a site preparation burn in Gloucester County with a new drone equipped with an aerial ignition device. The drone will help the VDOF in accomplishing a strategic objective of putting more prescribed fire on the landscape. (pictured)



- ◆ Matt Wolanski (senior area forester) met with NRCS staff and the NRCS State Conservationist to showcase a wetland restoration project in Shenandoah County, while discussing the value of the VDOF-NRCS partnership. The project involved the planting of over 4,000 wetland-tolerant, native shrubs and hardwoods across a 13.6 acre footprint. The project goal is using forests to protect wetland ecosystems and water quality.
- ◆ Matt Wolanski and Zach Arnold (area forester) met with staff from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to release mile-a-minute weevils at the Paul State Forest. Approximately 1,000 mile-a-minute weevils were released to help mitigate the new infestation of mile-a-minute vine and mitigate the effects this invasive species has on forest health on the state forest. (pictured)



Public Information

- ◆ The National Project Learning Tree (PLT) newsletter recently included an article about Country Day School in McLean, Virginia, which recently became the first Early Childhood PLT-Certified GreenSchool in the nation. The teacher who wrote the article cited Page Hutchinson as instrumental to the school's certification: https://www.plt.org/story/tips-from-plts-first-early-childhood-certified-greenschool/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=july_branch_2021&utm_content=button
- ◆ Michelle Stoll (public information director) met with Virginia Forestry Association (VFA) staff to outline their support of the RT celebration at this year's Forestry Summit. The RT video (to be named) will "premier" at the awards ceremony, accompanied by remarks from Rob Farrell and Secretary Ring, if available. VDOF will also present a plaque of appreciation to VFA for their support of the RT program over the years.
- ◆ Forestry service providers continue to register with the new VDOF website. As of this week, there were 68 business directory user accounts and 52 business listings. Of those, 29 are listed as consulting foresters, 22 as loggers and 8 "others." There is overlap among categories, as some providers offer multiple services.
- ◆ The Virginia Academy of Natural Resources, the virtual camp offered this year in collaboration with Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD), was held June 12-16. Twenty-eight campers attended - fewer than Camp Woods and Wildlife's typical 50 - 60 campers, but a

respectable showing for this temporary solution due to COVID-19 restrictions. Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) and Bonnie Mahl (VASWCD education coordinator) put together and hosted this virtual camp, which included themed daily presentations, small group work, and “on-your-own” field studies supported by materials sent to participants. Participating VDOF staff (presenters, group leaders, and planning team members) included Ellen Powell, Tom Snoddy (area forester), Greg Estoll (senior area forester), Jon Perry (forest technician), Kathleen Ogilvy (area forester), Jordan Herring (senior area forester), and Justin Funk (area forester).

News Clips

- ◆ [Prolam to bring millions to Virginia forestry industry, new jobs in Patrick County](#)
- ◆ [Lumber exporter invests \\$1.1 million in new Virginia facility](#)
- ◆ [In the U.S. South, a forestry project helps Black families keep their land](#)
- ◆ [New Virginia state park honors Native American tribes that lived on the land for centuries](#)
- ◆ [Conservation efforts have saved China's giant pandas from the endangered species list](#)